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# COALITION PROVISIONAL AUTHORITY

## CPA DAILY

### *The Road Ahead in Iraq — and How to Navigate It*

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Americans can be proud of the role their fighting men and women played in freeing Iraq of Saddam Hussein and his cronies. The people of Iraq are now on the road to political and economic independence.

The first official step in this political transition at the national level occurs today, with the convening of the Iraqi Governing Council. This is the latest sign of progress. For the first time in decades, Iraqis are truly free. More than 150 newspapers have been started since liberation. All major cities and 85 percent of towns now have a municipal council where Iraqis are increasingly taking responsibility for management of local matters like health care, water and electricity.

Iraqis are speaking out and demonstrating with a vigor borne of 35 years of imposed silence. This is not yet a full democracy, but freedom is on the march, from north to south. Sadly, this progress is despised by a narrow band of opponents. A small minority of bitter-enders — members of the former regime's instruments of repression — oppose such freedom. They are joined by foreign terrorists, extreme Islamists influenced by Iran and bands of criminals. These people do not pose a strategic threat to America or to a democratic Iraq. They enjoy no support since their only vision is to reimpose the dictatorship hated by Iraqis. Our military will hunt them down and, as President Bush said, "They will face ruin, just as surely as the regime they once served."

These shadowy figures are killing brave Iraqis working with us, attacking soldiers and civilians, and trying to sabotage the fragile infrastructure. The attacks have drawn concern worldwide. My coalition colleagues and Iraqi friends have noticed that the attacks are often aimed at successes in the renewal of this nation. A week ago, an American soldier was mixing with students at Baghdad University, which reopened on May 17. Their presence was testimony to the educational progress that is blossoming here (public schools have also reopened). But our enemies fear enlightenment, so one of them killed the soldier.

The day before, 250 Iraqi police recruits graduated, the latest success in re-staffing law enforcement. Tens of thousands of Iraqi policemen are now on duty. But the enemies of freedom correctly felt threatened by the cooperation and professionalism the day represented, so they set off a bomb that killed seven new officers. Before the war, women had to travel miles for propane. Now, local councils are establishing distribution centers that make the gas readily available to households. On June 18, one American soldier was killed while guarding a center. The June 24th explosion at an oil refinery in Barwanah is another example of political sabotage on Iraq's energy supply.

With these attacks on Iraq's new successes, citizens of coalition nations ask how long we will remain in Iraq — and some Iraqis may doubt our ability to improve their lives. As President Bush has made clear, we are committed to establishing the conditions for security, prosperity and democracy. America has no designs on Iraq and its wealth. We will finish our job here and stay not one day longer than necessary.

We have a plan to support the establishment of this government of, by and for Iraqis. After months of consultations with Iraqis, we have taken the first step in establishing an interim administration. Today, the Governing Council of Iraq will meet. It represents all the strands from Iraq's complicated social structure — Shiites, Sunnis, Arabs, Kurds, men and women, Christians and Turkmens. The council will immediately exercise real political power, appointing interim ministers and working with the coalition on policy and budgets.

At the same time, the council will establish procedures to write Iraq's new constitution. Once it is ratified by the people, elections can be held and a sovereign Iraqi government will come into being. So the question of how long the coalition will stay in Iraq depends in part on how quickly the Iraqi people can write and approve a constitution.

The coalition recognizes the urgency of marrying economic well-being to political freedom. For 35 years, the country's assets were misappropriated or stolen. We are pouring resources into re-establishing basic services and creating jobs. Our economic reform plan will entail a major shift of capital from the value-destroying state sector to private firms. We are also creating a social safety net for any resulting disruptions. And we believe that a method should be found to assure that every citizen benefits from Iraq's oil wealth. One possibility would be to pay social benefits from a trust financed by oil revenues. Another could be to pay an annual cash dividend directly to each citizen from that trust.

In all this, the coalition is working closely with Iraqis who will eventually be responsible for their country's well-being. For our three priorities — security, politics and the economy — the strategy provides for the successful transition to a stable and reformed Iraq. This does not mean that the road ahead is without danger. The combination of a broken infrastructure and acts of sabotage could mean a rough summer. We will suffer casualties, as the bitter-enders resort to violence. We are also braced for an increase in terrorism by non-Iraqis, but no one should doubt our determination to use our power in the face of violent acts.

Once our work is over, the reward will be great: a free, democratic and independent Iraq that stands not as a threat to its neighbors or the world, but as a beacon of freedom and justice